



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Volunteer stereotypes, stigma and relational identity projects

Citation for published version:

Ho, M & O'Donohoe, S 2014, 'Volunteer stereotypes, stigma and relational identity projects', *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 48, no. 5/6, pp. 854-877. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0637>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0637](https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0637)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

European Journal of Marketing

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Ho, M., & O'Donohoe, S. (2014). Volunteer stereotypes, stigma and relational identity projects. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(5/6), 854-877. 10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0637

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



This is the author's accepted manuscript for the article:

Ho, M., & O'Donohoe, S. (2014). Volunteer stereotypes, stigma and relational identity projects. *European Journal of Marketing*, 48(5/6), 854-877. [10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0637](https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-11-2011-0637)

Volunteer stereotypes, stigma, and relational identity projects

Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to enhance understanding of nonprofit marketing and consumer identities by exploring volunteering as a form of symbolic consumption. Specifically, it seeks to examine how young people - both volunteers and non-volunteers - understand and relate to volunteer stereotypes, and how they manage stigma in negotiating their social identities in relation to volunteering.

Design/methodology/approach – Grounded in consumer culture theory, the study uses mixed qualitative methods, incorporating focus groups, paired and individual interviews, and a projective drawing task.

Findings – Five volunteering-related stereotypes were identified: the older charity shop worker, the sweet singleton, the environmental protestor, the ordinary volunteer and the non-volunteer. Participants related to positive and negative attributes of these stereotypes in different ways. This led volunteers and non-volunteers to engage in a range of impression management strategies, some of which bolstered their own identities by stigmatising other groups.

Research limitations – The sample was drawn from 39 16-24 year-olds living in Scotland.

Practical implications – Since stereotypes are acknowledged as a major barrier to volunteering, particularly among young people, a greater understanding of how these stereotypes are understood and negotiated can assist nonprofit marketers in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Originality/value – This paper draws on theories of consumer culture and stigma to explore volunteering as a form of symbolic consumption; examines volunteering stereotypes among both volunteers and non-volunteers; and uses multiple qualitative methods to facilitate articulation of young people's experiences in this area.

Keywords: nonprofit marketing, volunteering, symbolic consumption, consumer identity, stereotypes, stigma

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

In difficult economic times, governments and citizens alike place more demands on the voluntary sector (Staetsky and Mahon, 2011). Attracting and retaining volunteers are therefore important goals for nonprofit marketers (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011), and this requires an understanding of the range of motives that people have for volunteering, or indeed for not volunteering. Functional approaches to volunteer motivations have contributed a great deal to this research agenda; as Francis (2011) notes, over 200 studies cite Clary *et al.*'s (1998) work on the Volunteer Function Inventory, based on six core functions of volunteering: value expression, learning, career benefits, ego protection, ego enhancement, and social relationships. Clary *et al.* (1998, p.1526) observe that their findings "emphasise the active role of individuals in setting and pursuing agendas that reflect important features of self and identity". Some recent studies have begun to examine congruity between volunteers' self-concept and their preferred voluntary organisation (Randle and Dolnicar, 2011), or how volunteering relates to people's values and identities (Grönlund, 2011) but many questions remain about how volunteers "experience and associate volunteering with their personal identities" (p.1).

National surveys in Britain had suggested a decline in the numbers of young people volunteering and that as an age group were under-represented in the volunteer workforce; with a 12% drop in participation rates amongst 16-24 year-olds from 1991 to 1997 (Davis-Smith, 1998). More recent research reveals a brighter outlook with 57% of 16-24 year-olds engaging in formal volunteering activities – a respectable level but still below the 58% to 64% reported among those aged 35-64 for example (Low *et al.*, 2007). Since 2007, the annual Citizenship survey have found that the numbers of 16-25 year-olds engaging in formal volunteering at least once a month have stagnated somewhat at 23% (Communities and Local Government, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). With corresponding figures for 35-74 year-olds ranging from 26% to 31% (Communities and Local Government, 2011), this suggests that there is still work to be done on encouraging young people to volunteer at rates on par with their older counterparts. This is against the backdrop of continual investment in promoting youth engagement and increasing volunteering opportunities for young people in local communities (Hill *et al.*, 2009; HM Government, 2010). In contrast, in North America, efforts to promote volunteering are instilled in school- and college-based community service programmes (Raskoff and Sundeen, 1999; Griffith, 2012). While such school-based interventions may aid the socialisation of students into roles and attitudes conducive to volunteering in later life, studies indicate that the success of such programmes has been mixed and depends on a range of structural and social factors (Raskoff and Sundeen, 1999; Griffith, 2010, 2012; Wilson, 2012).

Non-participation in youth volunteering represents missed opportunities for nonprofit organisations and for young people's personal, civic and career development (Brodie *et al.*, 2009; Handy *et al.*, 2010; National Centre for Social Research *et al.*, 2011). They also raise questions about young people's motives for approaching or avoiding voluntary work. Although they do not record whether attitudes vary according to factors such as gender, ethnic origin, or indeed volunteering status, several studies suggest that negative images of volunteering may reduce young people's willingness to participate (Volunteer Development Scotland, 1999; Ellis, 2004). A study undertaken for the Institute of Volunteering Research found that voluntary work was perceived as "boring" by 32% of the 14-19 year-olds surveyed and "not cool" by 23% (Ellis, 2004). This may reflect stereotypical views about volunteering rather than a well-informed assessment of volunteering opportunities for young people.

Stereotypes comprise “one group’s generalised and widely accepted beliefs about the personal attributes of members of another group” (Sheehan, 2004, p.82), with the stereotyped group seen as homogeneous and having fixed attributes (Pickering, 2001). This interpretation is supported by qualitative findings that perceptions of volunteering as an “old-fashioned” activity, undertaken by “white, middle-aged, middle-class females”, serve as a barrier to participation among young people (Niyazi, 1996). Young volunteers are reported to have had “a distorted impression” of volunteers as “grannies in charity shops”, prior to participation (Volunteer Development Scotland, 1999, p.31). Various studies, within and beyond the domain of consumer research, have highlighted the particular sensitivity of young people to peer judgements and ridicule (Wooten, 2006), and recent research has highlighted the influence of social norms and primary reference groups on young adults’ participation in volunteering (Francis, 2011; Veludo-de-Oliveira *et al.*, 2012). This suggests that volunteering stereotypes and stigma may be particularly salient for young people. Indeed, Ellis (2004, p.iv) concluded that,

Many young people are conscious of the low status of volunteering among their age-group and speak of the stigma of looking ‘sad’ or ‘not cool’. Tackling this barrier is seen as central to any future efforts to mobilise young people to volunteer.

As Omoto and Snyder (1995) and Snyder *et al.* (1999) demonstrate in the context of AIDS charities, negative volunteer stereotypes can lead to stigmatised identities, with consequences for volunteer recruitment, satisfaction and retention. The volunteering literature has not addressed stereotypes in detail, however, and its account of stigma has focused on the distinctive case of AIDS charity work. Volunteer identities have also received relatively little attention to date. Thus it is not clear how stereotypes (positive or negative) interact with potential and current volunteers’ identities, even though this could inform portrayals of volunteers in recruitment campaigns. Furthermore, it is not clear how any resulting stigmatisation might be managed by volunteers, limiting understandings of how they may be retained and supported.

Volunteer stereotypes, stigma and identity projects appear to be particularly salient to young people, the target of many Government recruitment and retention initiatives (Rochester, 2006; Hill *et al.*, 2009; National Centre for Social Research *et al.*, 2011). This suggests that a study of volunteering stereotypes and stigma among young people, and the implications of this for how they manage their identity projects, has theoretical, managerial and public policy significance.

This paper proceeds by reviewing prior research on the challenges of attracting young people to volunteering and the contribution of consumer research and sociology to understandings of self-image, identity projects and stigma or “spoiled” identity (Goffman, 1963). As Brooks (2002) has argued, researchers interested in volunteering should not restrict their studies to survey data, since actively listening to volunteers can illuminate aspects of their motivations and experiences. Thus, the paper reports on a qualitative exploration of volunteer stereotypes among young people, their experiences of volunteer-related stigma, and the strategies employed to manage stigmatised elements of their identity related to volunteering. Our sample includes non-volunteers, because how they position themselves in relation to voluntary work, and to peers who volunteer, may also have implications for volunteer recruitment strategies and the identities of young people engaged in voluntary work. We conclude by considering this study’s contribution to theory and its implications for nonprofit organisations wishing to recruit, retain and support young volunteers.

Volunteering and young people

Volunteering involves engaging in “freely chosen and deliberate helping activities” (Snyder and Omoto, 2008, p.3). People give their time and categorise their helping behaviour in many different ways (Wilson, 2012), but voluntary work is often unpaid and undertaken as part of a group, club or organisation for the benefit of others (Low *et al.*, 2007). In the European Union, up to 94 million people engage in some form of volunteering (European Commission, 2010), contributing €277 million to the economy and providing much-needed services and support to others (European Volunteer Centre, 2011). In the UK, the volunteer profile has tended to be somewhat skewed towards an older demographic; with older age groups such as 35-44 and 55-64 year-olds volunteering at rates of 64% relative to 57% for 16-24 year-olds (Low *et al.*, 2007). Recent estimates of regular formal volunteering rates are fairly stable with 23% of 16-25 year-olds but corresponding figures for older age groups remain higher (26%, 27% and 31% respectively for 35-49, 50-64 and 65-74 year-olds) (Communities and Local Government, 2011). Promoting young people’s civic engagement with the voluntary sector has remained a priority for the British Government, with over £250 million pledged by the Minister for Young Citizens and Youth Engagement to encourage volunteering among young people (HM Government, 2010). While such initiatives have enjoyed some success (National Centre for Social Research *et al.*, 2011), they have focused on promoting volunteering opportunities to young people and rewarding participation, rather than on removing potential barriers to volunteering.

Several studies have identified a range of structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal obstacles to volunteering among young people (Wilson and Musick, 1999; Sundeen and Raskoff, 2000; Sundeen *et al.*, 2007; Gage and Thapa, 2011). These include lack of information, lack of resources (typically time or money); practical deterrents; and psychological barriers, such as poor self-confidence and insecurities about self-image (Haberis and Prendergrast, 2007; Brodie *et al.*, 2009). Perceptions of volunteers as “do-gooders” (Ellis, 2004; Hankinson and Rochester, 2005) and “wimps and goody goodies” (Gaskin, 1998) are unlikely to suggest voluntary work as an obvious route to enhancing self-image among young people. Indeed, given their desire for social approval (Wooten, 2006), young people seem particularly likely to be put off volunteering by negative images which could devalue their social identities. Negative images may vary by gender; a Scottish study of volunteer managers suggests that some young men shied away from volunteering because they associated it with “women’s work”, whilst young women rejected certain volunteering placements to avoid being seen as “macho” (Volunteer Development Scotland, 1999). Similarly, young men in Gaskin’s (1998) study expressed concerns that the negative connotations of volunteering in general and particular types of voluntary work would threaten their identity.

There is some evidence that “fear of alienation or setting yourself apart from the crowd” can be a barrier to volunteering among young people (Communities and Local Government, 2007, p.26). Thus, Wuthnow’s (1995) qualitative study found that being teased about being a “do-gooder” curbed the enthusiasm of 13-18 year-old volunteers, whilst 15% of the 11-18 year-olds surveyed by Ireland *et al.* (2006) thought their friends would laugh at those who volunteer. More positively, Sundeen and Raskoff (2000) found that friends were the best port of entry for teenage volunteers; being asked to volunteer by a friend or learning about volunteering opportunities through friends made a difference. Despite this, males and older teens were most likely to be disinterested in volunteering. Two recent studies highlight further the importance of social influence on young adults’ involvement in volunteering.

Francis (2011) argues that whilst Clary *et al.*'s (1998) Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) includes a social function, it does not capture sufficiently the importance of primary reference group norms. She found that the VFI explained only 11% of variance in 18-24 year-old Australian students' involvement in volunteering, which was also influenced by the extent to which they observed parents, siblings and close friends doing voluntary work. Francis (2011, p.9) suggests not only that her respondents were "motivated to be like, and be liked by, their important others", but also that "social functions and the norms of primary referents are key drivers in the volunteering behaviour of today's young adult university students". These findings resonate with several British studies. Thus, Davis-Smith (1998) found that two-thirds of young people saw their age-group as less likely to volunteer than older people, while Gaskin (1998) found a similar proportion believing that most people their age would not see the point in volunteering. Furthermore, in ten out of the sixteen subgroups she interviewed (including volunteers and non-volunteers aged 16-19 and 20-24), young people saw "friends don't think it's cool" as a reason for not volunteering with such peer pressure apparently more acute for young men. More recently, Veludo-de-Oliveira *et al.* (2012) undertook a longitudinal, mixed-method study of 18-25 year-old volunteers. They found that intended and sustained volunteering were strongly influenced by the extent to which respondents thought that important people in their lives supported their volunteering.

Overall, it seems that negative stereotypes associated with volunteering may pose problems for organisations seeking to recruit and retain young people, not least because of this age-group's sensitivity to how they are seen by their peers. This suggests the importance of understanding how young volunteers' self-identity may be shaped by others.

Consumption, identity projects and stigma

Volunteering can be seen as a form of symbolic consumption, with implications for the identities of those engaging in it (Wymer and Samu, 2002). Thus, adopting a consumer culture theory (CCT) perspective (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) may offer further insights into volunteering as a symbolic resource for individuals in creating personal, social and cultural identities. For Arnould and Thompson (2005, p.868), CCT embraces a range of theoretical perspectives seeking to explore "sociocultural, experiential, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption", with particular emphasis on complex and dynamic relationships "between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings". One of CCT's key research programmes concerns consumer identity projects – "the coconstitutive, coproductive ways in which consumers, working with marketer-generated materials, forge a coherent if diversified and often fragmented sense of self" (p.871).

There is a long and multidisciplinary tradition of research examining how individuals define themselves through consumption. Following Veblen (1899), Mead (1934) argued that consumption involved behaviours that were 'constituted' into action and meaningful in creating, confirming and transforming their socially situated identities. Similarly, Levy (1959) argued that products could be used to convey symbolic meanings, including those about the self.

The self-concept has been examined by many consumer researchers. Key contributions include Sirgy's (1982) distinction between actual, ideal, and ideal social self-image, and Belk's (1988) argument that consumers use possessions to extend and strengthen their sense of self. Others have suggested that we have multiple extended or possible selves - private, public or collective - which we articulate in certain circumstances and evaluate in terms of

their desirability and attainability (Schenk and Holman, 1980; Schouten, 1991; Kleine *et al.*, 1993). This suggests that as consumers, we display and use products in the pursuit of self-esteem, seeking to communicate our desired identity (Banister and Hogg, 2004). Thus, we prefer products and consumption practices with positive symbolic meanings, aligned with our desired selves, and we avoid those with negative symbolic meanings, related to undesired selves (Karanika and Hogg, 2010).

These consumer research studies resonate with Giddens' (1991) theory of the self as a narrative, reflexive project, and with postmodern views of the self as fragmented (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), saturated (Gergen, 1991) or fluid (Bauman, 1996). Studies highlighting social and situational influences on the self suggest that it needs to be managed or performed in the presence of others (Goffman, 1959), and scholars within and beyond the marketing discipline have highlighted the importance of the social self and relational identity projects (Mason 2004; Hamilton and Hassan, 2010). This suggests that consumer identity projects are complex and often contradictory, involving "myriad coping strategies, compensatory mechanisms, and juxtapositions of seemingly antithetical meanings and ideals" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p.871).

Goffman's dramaturgical perspective is particularly helpful here. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) drew a parallel between everyday interactions and theatrical performances, using the metaphors of drama, ritual and game to examine how we might manage other people's impressions of ourselves (John, 1996). Goffman defined performance as a complex activity undertaken by individuals in the presence of particular observers, and having some influence on them. Performers draw on the arts of impression management, engaging observers through defensive and protective practices in their attempts to create believable performances.

Goffman (1963) subsequently focused on how people cope with stigmatisation, based on physical or character attributes or membership of particular racial, national or religious "tribes". He saw stigma as a "spoiled identity" arising from a "deeply discrediting" attribute that transforms the bearer "from a whole and usual person to a tainted discounted one" (p.3). In the case of courtesy stigma, people are tainted by association, as has been observed among volunteers for AIDS charities (Omoto and Snyder, 1995; Snyder *et al.*, 1999). Stigmatised people are subject to stereotypical representations that mark them out as not "normal". Goffman made an important distinction between "the situation of the *discredited* with tension to manage and the situation of the *discreditable* with information to manage" (p.125, emphasis added). Thus, when their stigma is visible or already known, people may use "covering" strategies, attempting to reduce tension in social situations by performing in ways that will blend in with those considered "normal". Those whose stigma is not obvious or already known to others, however, may favour "passing" strategies, controlling information about their identity in order to be seen as "normal".

Goffman's work has inspired a vast amount of research, with many studies focusing on stigma arising from physical and mental health, "deviant" occupations, race, sexual orientation and marital status. Link and Phelan (2001) argue that much of this research presents stigma as "something *in the person* rather than a designation or tag that others affix to the person" (p.366, original emphasis). Their sociological definition involves the exercise of social, economic or political power in the process of identifying and labelling differences; associating those differences with negative attributes (stereotyping); separating *us* from *them*, and subjecting *them* to status loss and discrimination. While this framework is valuable in

highlighting stigma as a social process, others have demonstrated the importance of situational factors in shaping the impact of stigmatisation on self-esteem (Crocker, 1999) and of *felt* as well as *enacted* stigma on people's actions (Scambler and Hopkins, 1986). More recently, Kraus (2010) points to the existence of "soft" stigma, whereby people experience snubs and slight embarrassments arising from particular leisure pursuits, potentially undermining their sense of self-worth.

Stigma has been related to consumption by Hamilton and Hassan (2010) who explored attitudes to smokers across Europe. They found that while smokers believed themselves to be stigmatised for their character blemishes, it was their behaviour that non-smokers tended to stigmatise. Smokers reported feeling embarrassed, excluded, disempowered, guilty and ashamed, with these emotions "heightened when in the presence of non-smokers" (p.1109). Smokers' coping strategies revolved around managing such negative emotions rather than changing their behaviour. The strategies reported included assuming the role of victim, condemning the condemners, denial, defiance and masking.

Overall, identity emerges from this range of literature as multifaceted, situational, and performed through interaction with others. It highlights that stigma or spoiled identity arises through social processes of stereotyping and othering. These theoretical insights suggest that negative images of volunteering among young people require further attention. Prior research has offered little detail on what stereotypes, if any, young volunteers and non-volunteers associate with volunteering, how those stereotypes relate to their own identity projects, or how they might manage any negative or stigmatised elements of their identities in relation to volunteering.

Methodology

This paper draws on a broader study which used survey and qualitative research to examine how children and young people donate and relate to charity. The focus here is on the qualitative elements of the study exploring what stereotypes, if any, 16-24 year-olds associated with volunteering, and how these related to their personal identity projects, experiences of stigmatisation and resulting impression management strategies. The study sought the views of both volunteers and non-volunteers in order to compare how they perceived and related to volunteer stereotypes.

As Wuthow (1995, p.12) contends, "to understand kindness, we must talk to people, paying close attention to the language they use", and seek to understand volunteering from their perspective. Framing volunteering as a form of symbolic consumption (Wymer and Samu, 2002) the qualitative research reported here was grounded in the consumer culture theory tradition (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), and focused on relationships between consumption practices and identity projects.

The data in this paper relate to the experiences of thirty-nine 16-18 and 22-24 year-olds living in central Scotland. Whilst our sample does not include the full range of 16-24 year-olds included in previous studies of British young people, we believe that focusing on the younger and older end of this age range is appropriate to a study of volunteering identities. Late adolescence and early adulthood are particularly important for identity construction and maturation (Kohlberg, 1975). Erikson (1968) highlights the identity crises associated with these periods and notes that adolescents experiment with various social roles, including being a fully-fledged citizen. Those aged 16-18 are often approaching or experiencing significant

transitions, such as the shift from school to university or work, whereas those aged 22-24 are still establishing themselves in the adult world, with many recently graduating from full-time education (Arnett, 2004).

Research design was guided by participatory research principles (Hart, 1992), which led to the young people being invited to choose whether they would be interviewed in a group, with a friend, or on their own. This degree of choice was intended to create an environment where young people would feel comfortable expressing a range of views and experiences. The process led to six focus groups, interviews with eight individuals and four friendship pairs, offering insights into how the construction of volunteering stereotypes and identities might vary in different social contexts. Purposive sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used in order to include young people in a range of educational and occupational settings, and those involved (or not involved) in a range of charitable activities, including formal volunteering. Of the thirty-nine participants, twenty-eight were aged 16-18; this was because they were recruited through several schools, where the logistics favoured focus groups. The 22-24 year-olds were recruited with the help of the first author's personal network. Where possible, participants were interviewed again after several months, in order to build rapport, generate more reflective accounts, and track changing circumstances, experiences and attitudes. Sessions lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and took place wherever participants preferred, typically at home or on educational or work premises.

Table 1 presents participants' details, including the pseudonyms used for them, their current status as formal volunteers (V) or non-volunteers (NV), and the nature and number of interviews in which they participated. The sample is skewed towards non-volunteers (with twenty-nine non-volunteers); since young people are the age-group least likely to volunteer (Low *et al.*, 2007), this is not surprising. Of the ten volunteers, seven were female, in keeping with previous findings that women are more inclined to engage in formal volunteering (Wymer and Samu, 2002; Einolf, 2011).

Table 1: Study participants and interview formats

16-18 year-olds (all students)	
Focus group 1	Alice (16, NV), David (16, NV), Lizzie (16, NV), Tina (16, NV)
Focus group 2	Kirsty (16, NV), Linda (16, NV), Lucy (17, NV), Rosie (17, NV)
Focus group 3	Christine (17, NV), Dominic (17, NV), Greg (18, NV), Rita (18, NV)
Focus group 4	Alison (16, NV), Ellie (17, NV), Emily (16, NV), Jo (16, NV), Jonathan (17, NV), Sophie (17, V)
Focus group 5	Chloe (17, V), Hannah (17, NV), Jacob (16, NV), Matthew (16, NV), Ryan (17, NV)
Paired interview 1	Alan (17, V), Jane (18, V)

Paired interview 2	Michelle (18, NV)**, Teri (18, V)**
Individual interview 1	Michael (18, V)*
22-24 year-olds	
Focus group 6	James (24, accountant, NV)*, Peter (24, accountant, NV)*, Stephen (24, accountant, NV)*
Paired interview 3	Alex (22, student, NV)**, Colin (22, student, V)**
Paired interview 4	Euan (24, teaching assistant, NV)**, Lynne (24, journalist, V)**
Individual interview 2	Josie (23, learning assistant, V)*
Individual interview 3	Louise (23, nursery nurse, NV)*
Individual interview 4	Paul (23, civil servant, NV)*
Individual interview 5	Vivienne (22, speech language therapist, V)*

* follow-up individual interview conducted

** follow-up paired interview conducted

A semi-structured topic guide was used across all interview formats, with questions about volunteering posed in the context of broader discussion about charitable engagement; it was hoped that this would encourage participants to feel comfortable talking about particular activities that they did - and did not - undertake. Seeking thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973), participants were asked about their perceptions of the stereotypical volunteer. A projective drawing task was also introduced. Participants were asked to draw a typical volunteer, and their pictures served as an autodrawing device (Heisley and Levy, 1991), stimulating discussion about the physical appearance, personality and other attributes of the volunteers they had drawn. Participants were then asked how these stereotypes related to their own identities, either as volunteers or non-volunteers, how they thought other people related to them on the basis of their volunteering status, and how they responded to that.

All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic data analysis was conducted using standard word-processing packages rather than dedicated software such as NVivo. The authors read transcripts independently several times to achieve an overall sense of the data, noting patterns, coding thematically (Spiggle, 1994), and then undertaking a part-to-whole analysis of individual transcripts (Thompson *et al.*, 1989). The drawings were analysed and interpreted in conjunction with the running commentary provided by participants. Comparisons were made between volunteer and non-volunteer transcripts and across age and gender groupings, in relation to volunteer stereotypes, stigma and impression management. Emergent themes were explored, challenged and refined through discussion between the authors and iterative reviews of data and relevant literature.

In the presentation of findings below, extended quotations are attributed to participants and notations indicate their age, occupation (for older participants), interview format (FG, PI, II), and current volunteering status (V, NV).

Findings

Participants' accounts reflected a sense of multiple possible selves, depending on the social context (Schenk and Holman, 1980; Kleine *et al.*, 1993), with volunteering - or not volunteering - playing a role in the construction of desired and undesired selves (Banister and Hogg, 2004).

Goffman (1961, p.91) characterised individuals as managers of a 'holding company' of multiple selves, employing various techniques to influence how others perceive them. This appeared to be the case for participants in this study, regardless of their position on volunteering. Indeed, a strong theme running across the discussions of stereotypes, among all participants, was resistance to the notion that the volunteering-related self would dominate or destroy other possible selves.

The following sections present participants' perceptions and stereotypes in relation to volunteers and non-volunteers. As discussed below, although each group related to stereotypes differently, most stereotypes contained both positive and stigmatised elements. Later sections therefore examine how both groups engaged in particular impression management strategies related to their volunteering status.

Volunteering-related stereotypes

In this study, those actively involved in volunteering generally demonstrated a wider appreciation of its scope and potential (Ellis, 2004), while non-volunteers tended to express narrower, more stereotypical views. Some participants drew on personal experiences to challenge aspects of particular stereotypes, but there seemed to be a general acknowledgement of stereotyping in relation to voluntary work.

Stereotypes seemed to be drawn from the media, personal experience, personal contacts, and observation. All volunteers, and most non-volunteers, saw those who gave up their time for others as "*caring*", "*dedicated*" and "*considerate*", at least to some extent. Predictably, current volunteers did not characterise volunteering as "*dowdy*" or "*uncool*", but this did not stop some of them reproducing stereotypical images in their drawings, reflecting the prevalence of such collective representations (Crocker, 1999). Five volunteering-related stereotypes emerged from the drawingsⁱ and discussions: the older charity shop worker, the sweet singleton, the environmental protestor, the ordinary volunteer and the non-volunteer. As discussed below, some of these stereotypes were seen to be exclusively male or female, regardless of participant gender.

The older charity shop worker

By far the most common stereotype drawn and discussed was the older charity shop worker, who was typically depicted as female, middle-class and middle-aged. This representation is consistent with the stereotype discussed by Gaskin (1998) and Ellis (2004). The gendered depiction of the older charity shop worker relates to the wider association of women in volunteering roles (Einolf, 2011) or as a reflection of female volunteer preferences (Wymer,

2011). Many participants (regardless of volunteering status or gender) recalled seeing women like her working in charity shops. She was generally depicted or described as wearing glasses, perming her hair, and dressing in *“old-fashioned-clothes which she buys in the charity shops”* (Alice, 16, FG, NV). As Banister and Hogg (2004) might expect, this frumpy appearance had negative symbolic value for participants in this study, representing an undesired self across the sample.

This typical volunteer was also portrayed as an empty nester or widow with considerable spare time, seeking social interaction through her voluntary work. Again both groups distanced themselves from this image, although they related to it in different ways. For volunteers, it carried a stigma which they resisted, not wanting to see themselves as lonely, lacking other sources of fulfilment, or burdened with a courtesy stigma through association with *“spinsters”*, particularly for female volunteers who worked with older women. For non-volunteers, this stereotype allowed them to validate “us” at the expense of “them” (Link and Phelan, 2001); their lives were not so empty that they needed to engage in voluntary work.

This stereotype was not all negative, however, since it was also associated with a friendly, warm, patient and compassionate personality. These traits were considered desirable, particularly among volunteers. Lynne (24, journalist, PI, V) for example described the older charity shop worker in her picture as *“nice”, “caring”,* and someone *“who treats everyone like their children”*. Admiring older charity shop workers’ dedication, she related this to her desired social identity, commenting that *“it’s honourable that they spend their spare time helping other people. I want people to think I’m like that”*.

The sweet singleton

In some respects, the sweet singleton was a younger, more versatile version of the older charity shop worker. Not necessarily female, this typical volunteer was in his/her twenties or thirties, financially secure, well-educated and committed to volunteering, often across a range of activities or organisations. This volunteer type also had attractive personality traits; Peter (24, accountant, II, NV) for example described the version he drew as *“vibrant, enthusiastic, joyful, caring, kind”*. The sweet singletons’ defining characteristic, however, was their single status, which was linked to their dedication to volunteering. They were presented as being obsessive about charities - modern-day missionaries dedicating their lives to helping others.

This stereotype was only drawn and described by non-volunteers, so it is not clear how volunteers related to it. For the non-volunteers, however, the sweet singleton was on balance an undesirable stereotype, because volunteering was privileged at the expense of relationships with others. Thus, the sweet singleton was *“boring”* or *“uncool”* and had *“few friends ... that’s one of the main reasons they volunteer, to meet people”* (Lucy, 17, FG, NV). Peter (24, accountant, II, NV) was ambivalent about the personality of the woman he drew: on the one hand she was *“vibrant”*, but she was also *“quite dull since she doesn’t have many friends... she wears lots of cardigans, especially grey ones... she’s more likely to be single”*. The lack of social skills attributed to volunteers here is interesting, since most work with others and may be required to build rapport with people from a range of backgrounds. Again, it seems that such disparaging descriptions of the typical volunteer form part of a stigmatising process in which participants validate their relational identities as non-volunteers. One notable example of this process in action was provided by Stephen (24, accountant, II, NV). Describing his drawing of a sweet singleton, he commented that volunteering was not for him

because the tasks involved were likely to be beneath him: *“my time is really valuable... I’m just not the type of person to get my hands dirty clearing up rubbish or helping at a shelter”*.

The environmental protestor

Although campaigning and activism are included in sector definitions of volunteering and media portrayals of voluntary work, many participants commented that campaigning did not seem like *“real volunteering”*. Nonetheless, some still presented the protestor - male or female - as a stereotypical volunteer, particularly in relation to environmental issues. This was the most negative or undesirable of the four volunteering stereotypes, for both volunteers and non-volunteers.

Here, participants often described a passionate environmentalist who was relatively young and living a ‘hippy’ lifestyle. The protestor was depicted as having dreadlocks, wearing home-made clothes, cooking everything from scratch, relatively unconcerned about personal hygiene, and possibly even living in a tree. Protestors were also portrayed as *“smoking roll-ups”*, perhaps *“because of a crossover of having a rebellious streak”* (Michael, 18, II, V). Michael, an avid protestor himself, recognised this stereotype from his experience at protest camps. Consistent with theories of situational self-image (Schenk and Holman, 1980), he embraced it in the company of other protestors but distanced himself from it among *“ordinary”* peers.

The ‘hippie’ lifestyle was considered unconventional and challenging of societal norms, so that this stereotype was seen as an outcast. As with the sweet singleton, participants resisted an identity that involved immersion in a cause to the exclusion of other aspects of their lives. In some cases, the purity of protestors’ motivations was questioned, giving further reasons for participants to distance themselves from this stereotype. Jane (18, PI, V), for example, made it clear that volunteering gave her little in common with the protestor who represented *“smelly hippies... they tend to be very cliquey... I feel that they campaign more to be seen than out of genuine concern or knowledge about the issue”*.

The ordinary volunteer

Participants described this stereotype in quite neutral terms, and did not seem particularly concerned to approach or avoid this identity. By definition, these drawings showed people who looked unremarkable or ‘average’ and tended not to portray a particular age-group. It should not be surprising, then, that participants had relatively little to say about this stereotype.

Only current volunteers offered this representation, with some using it to reject the notion that they could be pigeon-holed themselves. Thus, Colin (22, student, PI, V) commented that *“I don’t think you’re able to distinguish between different types of volunteers. It’s like you’re judging people without knowing them. You don’t know what their motivations are for doing it or what kind of person they are”*. While this comment describes Colin’s non-judgemental values, it can also be read as a wish that others would refrain from labelling him on the basis of his voluntary work (Link and Phelan, 2001).

Vivienne (22, speech language therapist, II, V), an avid volunteer, was the only one who identified personally and explicitly with this stereotype. As she commented, *“I could just draw myself, since I don’t think there really is a stereotypical volunteer”*. Vivienne’s typical

volunteer was a normal person with a job, a house, friends and family, who would “*probably feel quite strongly about their cause, but it probably comes further down in the list of priorities in their life,*” rather than allowing it to “*take over their life*”. In her description as well as her drawing, Vivienne seems to be referencing herself, her values and her desired identity.

The non-volunteer

The typical non-volunteer also featured in discussions, with representations again reflecting participants’ own status and stake in relation to volunteering. Thus for volunteers, the non-volunteer was unkind and inconsiderate, whereas non-volunteers presented an image of someone who was younger, more sociable and cool.

Several volunteers reflected on how their perceptions of non-volunteers changed in parallel with their own experience. Prior to volunteering herself, Lynne (24, journalist, PI, V) had no strong views, but “*once you’ve volunteered and you know how easy it is to do and get into, then you feel like they’re [non-volunteers] being lazy.*” Thus, volunteering had become the norm for her, a desirable and moral activity setting her apart from non-volunteers. Similarly, Josie (23, learning assistant, II, V) noted how she developed stronger views about the personality traits of both groups as she broadened her own volunteering experiences.

Although the study’s participants sometimes related the non-volunteer to the ‘ordinary’ stereotype in that it “*could be anyone*”, peer attitudes seemed to exert a strong influence on how individuals talked about stereotypes. This highlights the influence of reference groups and social approval on volunteering behaviour (Francis, 2011; Veluda-de-Oliveria *et al.*, 2012). The significance of the situational context (Crocker, 1999) was also highlighted by comparisons across the three interviewing formats, since what was said tended to vary according to who was speaking and in what context. Volunteers tended to express more negative views, particularly in individual interviews and friendship pairs. In the focus groups, however, participants tended to be more circumspect: volunteers generally offered quite bland descriptions of the typical non-volunteer, while non-volunteers were wary of saying too much, perhaps because they felt a little defensive. Reflecting the social power dimensions of stigmatising processes (Link and Phelan, 2001), there was a sense of participants working out who did or did not volunteer, and negotiating the status implications of this based on the balance within the group. In one younger group, for example, people were reluctant to pass judgement on non-volunteers until someone declared that they “*just couldn’t be bothered*”, encouraging the others, also non-volunteers, to perform their social identities as unashamed non-volunteers. The performance of volunteer and non-volunteer identities is explored further in the following sections.

Stigma and impression management

Although the findings suggest that participants associated stigma with some aspects of the stereotypes discussed above, it was not always clear who constituted Goffman’s (1963) “normals” or “stigmatised” in this context. Volunteers and non-volunteers seemed to be engaged in shaping and even stigmatising each others’ identities. In-group and out-group distinctions were evident in classifying the self as a volunteer or non-volunteer, with each presenting the other as undesirable in some respects. This process of categorisation was important in defining personal and social identities for each individual (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Consistent with theories of multiple, situational, and relational selves (Schouten, 1991; Crocker, 1999; Banister and Hogg, 2004), identities seemed to be “spoiled” or validated according to the company in which participants found themselves. Most of the younger participants were non-volunteers, for example, and this made it possible for them to construct individual and collective identities as ‘normal’ within the focus groups. One group, however, included Chloe, a 17 year-old youth group volunteer. Drawing the “typical” volunteer on behalf of the group, she drafted an “ordinary” image that bore some resemblance to herself. The other participants were non-volunteers, however, and their attempts to influence what she drew suggested a disparaging attitude to volunteers:

Hannah: They're like females, natural-looking, like no make-up, just plain hair, plain-looking, plain shoes and clothes.

Ryan: I think long hair and tied back out of the way...

Jacob: Yeah, like boring hair. Also draw a plain white top.

Hannah: Put lots of patterns on her tops since she gets her clothes from charity shops.

Ryan: I think she wore glasses as well, I don't know why.

(Focus group 5, 16-17, mostly non-volunteers)

Thus, the non-volunteers cast Chloe's image in a less desirable light, shifting it from normal to “plain” and dowdy. This seemed to pose a threat to Chloe's identity as a volunteer, and to alienate her from the other participants, who were unaware of her status as a volunteer until the end of the focus group. This may explain why she contributed so little to the group's conversation during and after the drawing task, and the incident highlights the importance of primary reference groups to young volunteers.

Faced with threats to their identity, different strategies for managing stigma were evident among volunteers and non-volunteers, as discussed next.

Impression management among volunteers

In general, volunteers appeared to be selective and self-serving in relating themselves to the stereotypes they discussed: they identified with their positive, desirable personality traits, rather than negative features such as their appearance. Lynne (24, journalist, II, V) for example distanced herself from the older lady she had drawn, but wanted to see herself as equally “nice” and “caring”. Consistent with notions of relational identity (Mason, 2004), stigmatising non-volunteers as “lazy” or “not caring” could be seen as a way for volunteers to enhance their own self-esteem and sense of virtue, consistent with the enhancement function of the VFI (Clary *et al.*, 1998). Similarly, Vivienne (22, speech language therapist, II, V) and Michael (18, II, V) distanced themselves from the protestor stereotype that they had drawn, with Michael clearly stating that he was “not a vegan and I don't have dreadlocks”.

Clearly volunteering carries no obvious outward mark, facilitating use of Goffman's (1963) “passing” strategies. Some participants presented themselves as closet volunteers. Josie (23, learning assistant, II, V), for instance, volunteered for four different organisations. Consistent with Scambler and Hopkins' (1986) discussion of “stigma coaches”, Josie talked at length about how her friends had mocked her as a “do-gooder” when she started out, so that she had learned not to mention her volunteering to others unless she knew they also engaged in it.

Volunteering was clearly an important part of her actual self-identity, but she had learned to remove traces of it from her social identity in many settings.

Goffman's "covering" strategies were also in evidence, with volunteers conscious of their different audiences. Lynne (24, journalist, PI, V), for example, volunteered in both a charity shop and a soup kitchen for homeless people. Such different settings called for very different performances from her, and she also had to manage her identity in front of non-volunteer friends. She made a conscious effort to adjust her manner and appearance to project the personal front of what she saw as the stereotypical charity shop worker. She dressed more conservatively to blend in with the older charity shop workers, tried to present herself as "nice" and "polite", and affected interest in conversation topics that did not engage her in the slightest. The self as a reflexive project (Giddens, 1991), and a carefully modulated performance, are evident in her account of acclimatising to her different roles:

I would act differently in the two placements... I'd talk about going back home to see my family and things like that [in the charity shop] so I wouldn't ever talk about my social life. When I went to the soup kitchen, I thought it would be like that again but a lot of them were students and like my age so then I acted differently... you'd be really nice and polite, not like I'm not nice and well-mannered in normal life but you'd act a lot more differently... It's like you're performing, it's an act, like when you work in a restaurant, you're probably not in a happy mood but you have to put on a show, not like you're being fake but that's what people expect of me.

Lynne's account shows her performance of role segregation in these two placements. When working in the charity shop, she did not appear to challenge the stereotype but sought to be "fully seen in terms of the image" (Goffman, 1961, p.106). In the soup kitchen, she felt more able to perform her "actual" self, although she still dressed more conservatively there than in other settings. She also sought to invoke positive dimensions of the volunteering stereotype among her friends, pursuing her desired social self-image through connotations of kindness and caring.

Performing these multiple possible selves (Schouten, 1991), Lynne consciously altered her appearance to blend in with the older charity shop workers, although in other contexts she would avoid consumption choices linking her to this stigmatised 'out-group' (Berger and Heath, 2008). This suggests some fluidity of movement between groups through volunteering consumption and impression management. Similarly, Michael (18, II, V) disengaged from the undesirable environmental protester outgroup in the presence of "normals", toning down his language and views and presenting himself as a student who protested in contrast to "professional activists" who dedicated their lives to a cause. At protests and campaign camps, however, he actively lived up to the stereotype in appearance and manner, and drew on its radical and extremist dimensions to justify his own potentially law-breaking behaviour. These examples show the conscious and active roles volunteers played in management of their identity projects (Goffman, 1961; Clary *et al.*, 1998).

Impression management among non-volunteers

Just as Hamilton and Hassan (2010) found smokers "condemning the condemners", many non-volunteers seemed keen to stigmatise volunteers in order to deflect guilt or stigma from themselves, suggesting that protective motivations (Clary *et al.*, 1998) may also apply to non-

volunteers. As discussed above, for example, a group of non-volunteers influenced and interpreted the drawing of a volunteer stereotype in ways which allowed them to disparage volunteering. In other cases, non-volunteers offered exaggerated visual or verbal descriptions of the typical volunteer, such as the older charity worker who was *“so eager to please that she might kill you with kindness!”* or who *“probably wears a t-shirt that says ‘I love charity’ all the time”*. Similarly, Rosie (17, FG, NV) suggested that the sweet singleton would *“wake up thinking about charities, wears clothes from charity shops and just talk about charities stuff to everyone... he’s probably one of these freakishly happy people who smiles all the time.”*

Some non-volunteers resisted being stigmatised as *“uncaring”* by presenting themselves as potential future volunteers. For example, Rita (18, FG, NV) noted that *“I’m not a volunteer now but I’d like to be... just because I’m not volunteering at the moment doesn’t make me a bad person.”* Others sought to reconcile their actual identity as non-volunteers with ideal identities as caring individuals through trade-offs between giving money and giving time. Stephen (24, accountant, II, NV) seemed particularly keen to portray himself as kind and caring through generous donations to children’s charities: *“I’d much rather give money to charities, I love kids and that’s why I give a lot to children’s charities”*. In contrast to Lynne, who viewed volunteering as a means of claiming a superior moral identity, Stephen performed an elitist identity through his non-volunteering stance. He characterised his time as *“really valuable”* setting himself above those whose only option for making a difference included menial, *“dirty”* tasks such as clearing rubbish or serving those who had been discarded by society.

Conclusions

Volunteering as a form of symbolic consumption has received little research attention to date, although it has considerable implications for marketing theory and nonprofit marketing practice (Wymer and Samu, 2002; Randle and Dolnicar, 2011). This paper sought to contribute to knowledge in this area by enhancing understanding of volunteer stereotypes and stigma in young people’s negotiations of their identity projects. Previous research has found that volunteering motives are often linked to identity (Clary *et al.*, 1996, 1998), and that young people are heavily influenced by primary reference groups (Wooten, 2006; Francis, 2011; Veludo-de-Oliveira *et al.*, 2012), suggesting that negative stereotypes and stigma may reduce young people’s participation in voluntary work and adversely affect their volunteering experiences. Previous research, however, had not elaborated on the nature of stereotypes and stigma that might be associated with volunteering among young people, how these related to their desired or undesired selves (Banister and Hogg, 2004) or how they managed undesirable or stigmatised elements of their volunteer (or non-volunteer) identities.

Informed by consumer research and sociological studies of identity, stigma and impression management, our study sought to address these issues by exploring the experiences of young people who did and did not engage in voluntary work. Since our findings are drawn from a small-scale, interpretive and exploratory study undertaken with 16-18 and 22-24 year-olds living in Scotland, generalisations beyond this particular context need to be treated with caution. McQuarrie and McIntyre’s (1988) distinction between the existence and incidence of phenomena is helpful here. While generalisations about the *incidence* of phenomena within the broader population cannot be made from qualitative data, they see it as entirely appropriate to make *existence* generalisations from phenomena identified in qualitative studies. Similarly, Quinn Patton (2002, p.584) argues that qualitative studies lend themselves

to extrapolations – to “modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations...[which are] logical, thoughtful and problem-oriented rather than purely empirical, statistical and probabilistic”.

In this spirit, we suggest that our study contributes to knowledge in several ways. In general terms, it shows how a consumer culture theory perspective (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) offers a fresh lens for examining volunteering as a form of symbolic consumption. More specifically, by encouraging participants to articulate, both visually and verbally, the cultural understandings of volunteering that resonated with a group of young people, it offers insights into the volunteering-related stereotypes circulating among them, and the impression management strategies employed by young volunteers and non-volunteers in relation to those stereotypes.

Five distinct stereotypes were identified in this study: the older charity shop worker, the sweet singleton, the environmental protestor, the ordinary volunteer, and the non-volunteer. All but one of these stereotypes (the ordinary volunteer) contained both positive and stigmatised elements, requiring volunteers and non-volunteers alike to engage in selective self-stereotyping to protect or enhance their self-esteem. The restriction of the ordinary volunteer stereotype to volunteers, and of the sweet singleton stereotype to non-volunteers, suggests that these constructions serve ego-enhancing or ego-protective functions (Clary *et al.*, 1998) for volunteers and non-volunteers respectively.

Hamilton and Hassan (2010) highlighted the “strong link between the self and the social” by exploring how smokers’ self-concepts were influenced by non-smokers. This study extends their work, and that of Omoto and Snyder (1995) and Snyder *et al.* (1999), by examining social processes of stigmatisation (Link and Phelan, 2001) in the context of volunteering. Our findings show how both volunteers and non-volunteers engaged in a number of impression management strategies (Goffman, 1959, 1963) to distance themselves from identities which seemed stigmatised or spoiled in particular contexts. It also shows how their performances shaped and even stigmatised aspects of each other’s identities. Thus, when non-volunteers characterised volunteers as dull, sad, or even obsessed, and when volunteers described non-volunteers as lazy or uncaring, they legitimised their own identities and undermined those of others. Volunteers protected threatened identities through passing and covering strategies. Non-volunteers, on the other hand, deflected guilt or stigma by caricaturing do-gooders, invoking their possible future volunteering selves, or presenting themselves as contributing to society in other ways.

These findings contribute to the literature on volunteering by showing that non-volunteers may also be stereotyped, feel stigmatised, and engage in impression management of themselves and others in ways that resonate with the social, protective and enhancement functions of Clary *et al.*’s (1998) Volunteer Function Inventory. Our study contributes to knowledge of volunteering as a process with antecedents, experiences and consequences (Omoto and Snyder, 1995; Snyder *et al.*, 1999) by suggesting how volunteer stereotypes may act as a barrier to volunteering and influence volunteering experiences; in Gaskin’s (2003) terms, it suggests that stereotypes may influence young people’s volunteering transitions, not only from “doubter” to “starter”, but also from “doer” to “stayer”.

Our findings have implications for public policy-makers and individual nonprofit organisations by suggesting that more effective recruitment, retention and support of young

volunteers may be achieved by fostering volunteering as the social norm and supporting volunteers in their identity projects.

In recruiting volunteers, this study suggests that increasing participation in voluntary work is not just a matter of raising awareness about the personal benefits of volunteering or making these more tangible by providing CV-enhancing certificates. There appears to be some potential in moving from benefits-focused to barrier-focused campaigns, at least among young people, which could break down the stigma of “uncool” worthiness and emphasise positive aspects of volunteering stereotypes capable of standing up to scrutiny from peers. The “ordinary” volunteer stereotype was not identified by non-volunteers in this study, highlighting the work to be done in this respect. A key challenge lies in normalising volunteering among young people, ideally to the extent that those who do *not* engage in this charitable practice may be seen as the ‘out-group’. Given previous efforts to promote youth volunteering through creating opportunities and highlighting benefits, this study suggests the value of communications aimed at normalising volunteering and volunteers.

It could be argued that appealing to non-volunteers by changing perceptions of volunteers and volunteering might alienate those who currently volunteer. We suggest that increasing the social status of volunteers is unlikely to be divisive however, and there are inspiring precedents in the commercial world. Following the trend for member-get-member campaigns (Peeter *et al.*, 2003) in commercial contexts, young volunteers themselves could be encouraged to act as ambassadors in recruitment campaigns, actively encouraging people within their social circle to consider voluntary work. Given the strong influence of reference groups for young people, peer advocacy could be a force for normalising and promoting rather than discouraging volunteering (Sundeen and Raskoff, 2000). Further possibilities are suggested by Fallon’s advertising campaign for the Skoda Fabia, which entered advertising lore for the way in which it overcame the Skoda stigma in Britain. In this case, the advertising agency recognised that it was not enough to tell potential purchasers about the new car’s positive attributes; Skoda’s status as a brand was so low at the time that anyone buying the new car risked becoming the butt of jokes from others. The genius of the campaign lay in changing *everyone’s* perception of the brand, not just that of potential purchasers. This not only allowed the brand’s best prospects to feel more comfortable about buying and being seen with a Skoda, but also encouraged others to consider the brand (Green and Morgan, 2002). Similarly, if recruitment campaigns can challenge volunteer stereotypes among the general public, those who do volunteer could feel less embarrassed about their prosocial activities, and those who do not volunteer might be more open to seeing it as a viable option for themselves.

Demonstrating through advertising testimonials that many “ordinary” young people volunteer may stimulate such an attitude change. Given the tendency for non-volunteers to characterise volunteers as lonely, promotional materials could challenge this by emphasising the social skills required in volunteering. Volunteering may also be presented as aspirational by involving celebrities as role models. Many studies have highlighted the importance of celebrities in contemporary youth culture (Lindstrom, 2003). Encouraging celebrities to frame their charitable work as volunteering in general media interviews as well as in specific recruitment campaigns may therefore help to give voluntary work (and young volunteers) greater cultural cachet among this audience. Finally, concerns among this study’s participants that the volunteering-related self would dominate or destroy other possible selves suggest that campaigns may usefully show volunteering as part of young people’s identities and lifestyles rather than the sole or main component of these.

This study also has practical implications for organisations' volunteer management strategies. Organisational support can increase participation and reduce withdrawal (Farmer and Fedor, 1999), and this may apply in relation to stigmatisation as well; as Snyder *et al.* (1999) observed, volunteers who anticipated a degree of stigmatisation at the outset were better able to sustain voluntary work with AIDS charities than those who were unprepared for it. This suggests that initial training for young volunteers could usefully include some consideration of peer reactions and ways of responding to these.

Clearly, charities dealing with issues particularly relevant to young people may find it easier to recruit and retain young volunteers, and a critical mass of young people working in such organisations may be a source of mutual support. Other organisations also need to attract young volunteers, however, and young people have much to gain from learning to engage with a wider social group. Thus, organisations could consider providing, individually or collectively, a support network for young volunteers to reinforce the positive status of volunteering. Creating volunteer communities, virtually or non-virtually, could help reinforce in-group dynamics among volunteers by offering a shared, self-managed space to generate positive peer approval for their volunteering activities and identities, and even to model positive impression management strategies. Sensitivity to different volunteering stereotypes and identities held by team members may also help managers address interpersonal tensions and disagreements between volunteers.

This exploration of volunteer-related stereotypes and stigma focuses on a particular age-group and cultural context. Amongst other age-groups and in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts, such stereotypes may differ in number, nature and potential for stigmatisation, and may have different consequences for the identity projects and impression management strategies of volunteers and non-volunteers. Therefore, other qualitative studies, among different demographic and cultural groups, could contribute to understanding of the relationship between volunteer stereotypes, stigma and identity projects.

This paper has highlighted the social construction of volunteer identities, not least in relation to non-volunteers, and this also merits further research attention. Such issues could fruitfully be explored among volunteers at different stages of their volunteering experiences, in different volunteering contexts. Examining the experiences of volunteers who help multiple organisations could deepen understandings of situational identity projects and impression management strategies. There is also scope to apply a consumer culture theory lens to other aspects of charitable engagement, such as donor experiences and identities. Beyond interpretive studies, there is scope to develop rating scales to measure the prevalence of different volunteer stereotypes, the degree of stigma associated with them, and their implications for volunteering.

References

- Arnett, J.J. (2004), *Emerging Adulthood: The winding road from late teens through the twenties*, OUP, New York.
- Arnould, E.J. and Thompson, C.J. (2005), "Consumer culture theory (CCT): twenty years of research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 868-882.

Banister, E. and Hogg, M.K. (2004), "Negative symbolic consumption and consumers' drive for self-esteem", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 38 No. 7, pp. 850-868.

Bauman, Z. (1996), "From pilgrim to tourist, or a short history of identity", In Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. (Eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Sage, London, pp. 18-36.

Belk, R. (1988), "Possessions and the extended self", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 139-168.

Berger, J. and Heath, C. (2008), "Who drives divergence? Identity signalling, outgroup dissimilarity and the abandonment of cultural tastes", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 95 No. 3, pp. 593-607.

Brodie, E., Cowling, E., Nissen, N., Ellis, A., Jochum, V. and Warburton, D. (2009), *Understanding participation: A literature review*, Pathways through Participation, London.

Brooks, K. (2002), "Talking about volunteering: A discourse analysis approach to volunteer motivations", *Voluntary Action*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 13-30.

Clary, E.G., Synder, M. and Stukas, A. (1996), "Volunteers' motivations: findings from a national survey", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol.25 No. 4, pp. 485-505.

Clary, E.G., Synder, M., Ridge, R., Copeland, J., Stukas, A., Jaugen, J. and Miene, P. (1998), "Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: a functional approach", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 74 No. 6, pp. 1516-1530.

Communities and Local Government (2007), *Motivations and barriers to citizen governance*, CLG, London.

Communities and Local Government (2008), *2007-08 Citizenship Survey*, CLG, London.

Communities and Local Government (2009), *2008-09 Citizenship Survey*, CLG, London.

Communities and Local Government (2010), *2009-10 Citizenship Survey*, CLG, London.

Communities and Local Government (2011), *2010-11 Citizenship Survey*, CLG, London.

Crocker, J. (1999), "Social stigma and self-esteem: situational construction of self-worth", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 35, pp. 89-107.

Davis-Smith, J. (1998), *The 1997 national survey of volunteering*, IVR, London.

Einolf, C. (2011), "Gender differences in the correlates of volunteering and charitable giving", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 40 No. 6, pp. 1092-1112.

Ellis, A. (2004), *Generation V: young people speak out on volunteering*, Institute for Volunteering Research, London.

Erikson, E.H. (1968), *Identity, youth and crisis*, Faber and Faber, London.

European Commission (2010), *Volunteering in the European Union - final report*, GHK, London.

European Volunteer Centre (2011), *The European volunteer measurement project*, CEV, Belgium.

Farmer, S.M. and Fedor, D.B. (1999), "Volunteer participation and withdrawal: a psychological contract perspective on the role of expectations and organisational support", *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 349-367.

Firat, A.F. and Venkatesh, A. (1995), "Liberatory postmodernism and the reenchantment of consumption", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 239-267.

Francis, J. (2011), "The functions and norms that drive university student volunteering", *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, Vol. 16, pp. 1-12.

Gage, R.L. and Thapa, B. (2011), "Volunteer motivations and constraints among college students: analysis of the volunteer function inventory and leisure constraints models", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 3, pp. 405-430.

Gaskin, K. (1998), *What young people want from volunteering*, IVR, London.

Gaskin, K. (2003), *A choice blend*, IVR, London.

Geertz, C. (1973), *The interpretation of cultures*, Basic Books, New York.

Gergen, K.J. (1991), *The saturated self: dilemmas of identity in contemporary Life*, Basic Books, New York.

Giddens, A. (1991), *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967), *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*, Aldine, Chicago.

Goffman, E. (1959), *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Penguin Books, London.

Goffman, E. (1961), *Encounters: two studies in the sociology of interaction*, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis.

Goffman, E. (1963), *Stigma – notes on the management of spoiled identity*, Penguin Books, London.

Green, L. and Morgan, F. (2002), 'It's a Skoda. Honest': the profitable return on brave communication, Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, Best Agency Prize, IPA Effectiveness Awards, London.

Griffith, J. (2010), "Community service among a panel of beginning college students: Its prevalence and relationship to having been required and to supporting 'capital'", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 884-910.

Griffith, J. (2012) "A decade of helping: Community service among recent high school graduates attending college", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 5, pp. 786-801.

Grönlund, H. (2011), "Identity and volunteering intertwined: reflections on the values of young adults", *Voluntas*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 852-874.

Haberis, A. and Prendergrast, J. (2007), *Incentives and barriers to becoming and remaining a councillor: A review of the UK literature*, CLG, London.

Hamilton, K. and Hassan, L. (2010), "Self-concept, emotions and consumer coping", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 44 No. 7/8, pp. 1101-1120.

Handy, F., Cnaan, R., Hustinx, L., Kang, C., Brudney, J.L., Haski-Leventhal, D., Holmes, K., Meijs, L., Pessi, A.B., Ranade, B., Yamauchi, N. and Zrinscak, S. (2010), "A cross-cultural examination of student volunteering: is it all about résumé building?", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 39 No. 3, pp. 498-523.

Hankinson, P. and Rochester, C. (2005), "The face and voice of volunteering: a suitable case for branding?", *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, Vol. 10 May, pp. 93-105.

Hart, R.A. (1992), *Children's Participation: from tokenism to citizenship*, UNICEF, Florence.

Heisley, D. and Levy, S. (1991), "Autodriving: a photoelicitation technique", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 18, pp. 257-272.

Hill, M., Russell, J. and Brewis, G. (2009), *Young people, volunteering and youth projects: A rapid review of recent evidence*, IVR, London.

HM Government (2010) *An agenda for youth engagement*, TSO, London.

Ireland, E., Kerr, D., Lopes, J., Nelson, J. with Cleaver, E. (2006), *Active citizenship and young people*, Dfes, London.

John, J. (1996), "A dramaturgical view of the health care service encounter: cultural value-based impression management guidelines for medical professional behaviour", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 30 No. 9, pp. 60-74.

Karanika, K. and Hogg, M.K. (2010), "The interrelationship between desired and undesired selves and consumption: The case of Greek female consumers' experience", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 26 No. 11-12, pp. 1091-1111.

Kleine, R.E., Kleine, S.S. and Kernan, J.B. (1993), "Mundane consumption and the self: a social-identity perspective", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 209-235.

Kohlberg, L. (1975), *Collected papers on moral development and moral education*, Cambridge, Harvard.

Kraus, R. (2010), "'We are not strippers': how belly dancers manage a (soft) stigmatized serious leisure activity", *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 435-455.

Levy, S.J. (1959), "Symbols for sale", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 117-124.

Lindstrom, M. (2003), *BrandChild*, Kogan Page, London.

Link, B. and Phelan, J. (2001), "Conceptualizing stigma", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 27, pp. 363-385.

Low, N., Butt, S., Paine A. and Davis-Smith, J. (2007), *Helping out - a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving*, Cabinet Office, London.

Mason, J. (2004), "Personal narratives, relational selves: residential histories in the living and telling", *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp. 162-179.

McQuarrie, E. and McIntyre, S. (1988), "Conceptual underpinnings for the use of group interviews in consumer research", in M. Houston (Ed.) *Advances in Consumer Research* 15, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 580-86.

Mead, G.H. (1934), *Mind, self and society*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

National Centre for Social Research, Institute for Volunteering Research, University of Southampton, University of Birmingham, Public Zone (2011), *Formative evaluation of v, the national young volunteers' service: final report*, National Centre for Social Research, London.

Niyazi, F. (1996), *A route to opportunity: volunteering by young people*, National Centre for Volunteering, UK.

Omoto, A.M. and Snyder, M. (1995), "Sustained helping without obligation: motivation, longevity of service, and perceived attitude change among AIDS volunteers", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 68, pp. 671-686.

Peeter, W., Verlegh, A., Pruyn, H. and Peters, K. (2003), "Turning shoppers into sellers: Two experiments on member-get-member campaigns", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 30, p. 346.

Pickering, M. (2001), *Stereotyping*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.

Quinn Patton, M. (2002), *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd Ed.), Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Randle, M. and Dolnicar, S. (2011), "Self-congruity and volunteering: a multi-organisation comparison", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 45 No. 5, pp. 739-758.

Raskoff, S. and Sundeen, R. (1999), "Community service programmes in high schools", *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 62 No. 4, pp. 73-111.

Rochester, C. (2006), *Making Sense of Volunteering*, The Commission on the Future of Volunteering, London.

Scambler, G. and Hopkins, A. (1986), "Being epileptic: coming to terms with stigma", *Sociology of Health and Illness*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 26-43.

Schenk, C.T. and Holman, R.H. (1980), "A sociological approach to brand choice: the concept of situational self-image", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 7, pp. 610-614.

Schouten, J.W. (1991), "Selves in transition: symbolic consumption in personal rites of passage and identity reconstruction", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 412-425.

Sheehan, K. (2004), *Controversies in contemporary advertising*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Sirgy, M.J. (1982), "Self-concept in consumer behaviour: a critical review", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 287-300.

Snyder, M. and Omoto, A. (2008), "Volunteerism: Social issues, perspectives and social policy implications", *Social Issues and Policy Review*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 1-36.

Snyder, M., Omoto, A. and Crain, A. (1999), "Punished for their good deeds", *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 42 No. 7, pp. 1175-1192.

Spiggle, S. (1994), "Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 491-503.

Staetsky, L. and Mohan, P. (2011), *Individual voluntary participation in the United Kingdom: an overview of survey information*, Third Sector Research Centre Working Paper 6, London.

Sundeen, R. and Raskoff, S. (2000), "Ports of entry and obstacles – Teenagers' access to volunteer activities", *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 179-197.

Sundeen, R., Raskoff, S. and Garcia, M.C. (2007), "Differences in perceived barriers to volunteering to formal organisations – lack of time versus lack of interest", *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 279-300.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. (1979), "An integrative theory of inter-group conflict", In Austin, W.G. and Worchel, S. (Eds) *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, Brooks, Monterey, pp. 7-24.

Thompson, C., Locander, W. and Pollio, H. (1989), "Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: the philosophy and method of existential phenomenology", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, pp. 133-145.

Veblen, T. (1899), *Conspicuous consumption*, Penguin, London.

Veludo-de-Oliveria, T., Pallister, J. and Foxall, G. (2012), "Accounting for sustained volunteering by young people: An expanded TPB", *Voluntas* DOI 10.1007/s11266-012-9317-6; published online July 2012.

Volunteer Development Scotland (1999), *Volunteering: User-friendly for youth? A study of volunteering by young people in Scotland*, Volunteer Development Scotland, Stirling.

Wilson, J. (2012), "Volunteerism research: A review essay", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 176-212.

Wilson, J. and Musick, M. (1999), "The effects of volunteering on the volunteer", *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 62 No. 4, pp. 141-168.

Wooten, D. (2006), "From labelling possessions to possessing labels: ridicule and the socialization among adolescents", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 33, pp. 188-198.

Wuthnow, R. (1995), *Learning to care*, OUP, New York.

Wymer, W.W. (2011), "The implications of sex differences on volunteer preferences", *Voluntas*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 831-851.

Wymer, W.W. and Samu, S. (2002), "Volunteer service as symbolic consumption: gender differences and occupational differences in volunteering", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 18 No. 9/10, pp. 971-989.

ⁱ Drawings are available on request from the corresponding author.